

27
The Rule of Equity.

A
SERMON

Preach'd at the

694.9.24.
5

ASSIZES

HELD AT

OXFORD,

March 14. 17¹⁶₁₇.

By the Right Honourable

Mr. Justice *BLENCOW.*

AND

Mr. Baron *MONTAGUE.*

By THOMAS. DOD, M. A. Fellow of
Braze-Nose-College, OXON.

OXFORD,

Printed at the THEATRE for *Hen. Clements*, and are to
be Sold by *Hen. Clements* Bookseller at the Half
Moon in *St. Paul's Church yard London*, 1717.

At a Meeting of the *Vice Chancellor*,
Heds of Houses and Proctors,
March 16th 17¹⁶₁₇.

ORDERED, That Thanks be given to Mr. *Dod* for his Affize Sermon preached before the Judges on Thursday the fourteenth of this instant *March*, wherein he expressed so just a Zeal and Indignation against the groundless and uncharitable imputation of Schism, charged upon the whole body of the Church of England by those, who have unwarrantably separated from our Communion, and have by their Principles and practices plainly discovered a Seditious disposition to subvert our present happy establishment in Church and State, and to alienate the affections of the people from his most Sacred Majesty King *George*, and the Protestant succession in his Royal Family.

And that Mr. *Dod* be desired to print the same.

Geo. Cooper Regist. Univ. OXON.



Matth. 7. Ver. xii.

Therefore all things whatsoever Ye wou'd that Men should do to You, do ye even so to them.

MAN may be considered either as a Creature, who in an abstracted State from any intercourse with the World, is under obligations of Duty *only* to his Maker; or as a Member of the Community, who besides the more *immediate* and *direct* expressions of Duty towards his God, has several *Relative* or *Collateral* Duties to discharge, answerable in some degree to the Exigencies of Society, to the just Demands and Expectations of his fellow-Creature. In both Views Reason and the Gospel have furnish'd Him with excellent directions for the Conduct of his Life; but in respect to the Latter, nor Reason, nor Gospel can give Him a Better, a more Plain or a more Comprehensive Rule of Practice than That in the Text.

It is rendered, *Therefore*, however the Form of the Introduction may seem to favour the Sequel, is not Causal in this Place; but a Particle of Order, a Note or Sign of Transition, whereby we are to understand there's a Change of the Subject, a passing from one thing to another without Deduction, or Dependence. Under this Remark the Words before us are entirely disengag'd from what goes before, and thus standing loose and independent upon their own bottom without any Visible Support of Premises, the *Importance* of'em seems Greater, and the *authority* more considerable.

Not that after all the Direction obliges by its own Immediate Force because the signify'd will of God being the ultimate or Supreme Rule of Life, This can only be Mediate or Subordinate at best, allowable no further, (tho' never to be set aside but upon Conviction of some Enormity in the Direction,) than as tis made Agreeable or Comfortable to that *last Resort*.

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The Reflection upon which is, that we shou'd use our utmost Endeavours so to be acquainted with God, and so to bring down and Submit our Selves in all things to his Pleasure, that in doing *our own* will we may be at Peace in doing *His* also.

Now tho' the Morality of the Text is of too boundless a Nature in the obligation to be confin'd or limited to Person, Time, or Place, yet there are certain seasons when particular Persons, as Those especially engaged in the *Courts of Justice* in any Cause or Prosecution, whether for bringing Malefactors to Punishment, the fixing an uncertain Tenure or adjusting Property shou'd be more intent, more resolutely Prepar'd to Discharge the Respective Duty, not only because they have more than ordinary Temptations to contend and struggle with at such a Juncture, from the Thirst of Revenge, from Avarice or Ambition, but because the giving way to these in any measure is not only a foul stain upon *Character*, but what also perverts and abuses the *Government's Provision* for the Publick Good, lays waste their own Conscience and brings upon *Themselves* the Immediate Guilt, perhaps of Bloodshed; upon their *Posterity* a lasting Punishment deriv'd; upon *Both* the Cries if not the Curses of Those, they have or wou'd have Injur'd in any Regard.

In the Prosecution of the Words I shall Endeavour.

- I. To explain and settle the *Precept*.
- II. To Urge and Recommend the *Practice* of It from such Arguments as arise from the Nature and Constitution of it.
- III. To point out some of those more remarkable *Obstructions* to the Practice of It, which at this Time seem the most likely to corrupt Us, with some Cursory Remarks upon 'em in order to prevent their Influence over Us.
- IV. I shall make a short *Reflection* or two from it, and Conclude.

I. To explain and settle the *Precept*.

The *Rule* is not to be understood to take place in an *Universal Sense*, as tho' the uncontrol'd *Force* of the *Precept*

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Precept was to bear down *all* that oppos'd, to Bind the Conscience and Direct the Practice in *all* Cases and Circumstances without Exception or Reserve. Such an unlimited Power in such an Exorbitant Latitude of Influence would be so far from securing the Peace of Mankind, that it wou'd break in, in a wild Extravagance, upon God and Man, Trample upon our Rights without Distinction, and Introduce Contention, Anarchy and Desolation. What wou'd aggravate the Horror of such a state is, that Barbarous and Cruel Usage wou'd Claim Impunity by statute, and Iniquity in effect be Establish'd by a Law.

Were we indeed what polluted Flesh and Blood will never be, void of Folly, Prejudice and Guilt; Innocent, Unbias'd, and Discerning as our first Parents before the Fall, this Practicall Maxim might hold *Universally*, but amidst an Extravagant, a Thoughtless, Sinful and Desperate People, there's an absolute Necessity for *Exception*, and the World may as well Renounce the Authority in every Branch of it, as be subject to a Power when not restrain'd so directly Prejudiciall and so Destructive to the Common Good of Mankind.

The *Exceptions* I shall make for explaining the *Precept* and for fixing the Rule, are of two sorts.

First, Such as relate to *Criminal Cases*.

Secondly, Such as arise from *Extravagance*, *Humour*, or *Peculiarity* of Temper.

First, Such as relate to *Criminal Cases*.

When in Danger or Distress we are liable to Suffer in our Persons, our Character or our Fortune, 'tis Natural not only to desire to escape, but to use what allowable Methods we can to extricate our selves out of those Difficulties that threaten us in any Capacity. We are not however to infer from hence, that tho' a Criminal, whom Guilt and the Laws have laid hold of, would naturally desire to be exempted from the Curse of Both, the Magistrate shou'd therefore, making the Case his Own, Decline to Condemn the Guilty, or Pronounce the Sentence. Here the *Publick* as well as the *Private* Interest is concern'd, and shou'd the Presumptuous

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tuous Sinner have such Indulgencies granted Him upon no other Bottom but because his Safety prompted Him to desire 'em, the next Insult wou'd rise Higher, and in the End, carrying about Him his Natural Desires for a Plea against Punishment, He would come over a Whole Neighbourhood like a Walking Pestilence at Noonday, Destroy with Impunity, and live on to be a Scourge to the Tame World.

It will be proper therefore to distinguish betwixt what Nature in a *Private Capacity* suggests, where Life or the Support of it is concern'd, and what Reason lays down as Equity, where the *Interest of Society* is Involved. To confound these, and then to Argue promiscuously and infer and apply the the same common Conclusion is to Mistake the Question, as taking into it more than belongs to it, so giving it not only a Force not its own, but a Force Pernicious and Fatal in its Consequences, a Force Subverting the Law and the Prophets.

Besides, In this Instance upon Examination we shall find that the Argument turns upon a wrong Supposition, and so for want of a true state of the Question is neither Pertinent nor Applicable. The *Magistrate* is not so much to consider the *Malefactor Himself* under the Notion of the *other Party* as the *State*, and then the Rule must be apply'd, not to the *Suggestions* of the Principle of Self Preservation in the Offender, but to the *Desires and expectations* of the Regular Part of the People, as They are suppos'd in necessary Construction to Desire at least that the *King's whole Council, and All that are put in Authority under Him may truly and indifferently Minister Justice*, not only to the *Maintenance of true Religion and Virtue*, but to the *Punishment of Wickedness and Vice*. The Case thus alter'd, the Magistrate will be oblig'd from the presum'd Wishes of the Innocent, from his own reasonable Expectations under an Injury; from the Publick Demand to appear sometimes in the Terror of His Power, with the necessary wholesome Severities of the Law at his Mouth, and the Sword of Justice in his Hand *Wilt Thou then not not be afraid of the Power? know then that*

that *He is the Minister of God and beareth not the Sword in vain, ordain'd of God a Revenger to execute wrath upon Him that Doth Evil.*

Secondly, The other Sort of Exceptions are such as may arise from *Extravagance, Humour, or Peculiarity of Temper.*

As this Rule is ordain'd by God to promote and maintain Justice, Charity, Order and Good Nature amongst Men; so it must turn upon Reason, upon the Nature and Circumstances of the Case 'tis apply'd to. When it Subsists upon Guilt, Prejudice, or Humour We are under the Guidance of an Impostor, and in Submitting to that Direction We can only be said at best to Deviate regularly; *deviate*, with Respect to any Correct or unblameable Conduct; *regularly*, in that We follow however a *False Rule*, or a *True one misapply'd*. A Man driv'n on by Lust or Passion may Possibly be Desirous of having things done to him in some Relation or other, where the Instance by no means either Authorises Him to return the Practice, or Justifies Him in It; in the present Intemperance his unbridl'd Appetite engaging Him in a Manner Inconsistent with Decency, Honour and Christianity.

Desire in some Cases tho' not Criminal raises no Obligation; a Man in Distress or low Fortune innocently and naturally enough Desiring a greater proportion of Assistance, than He can pretend any Right to, from Humanity the most Improv'd, or the most Elevated Christianity. But to be very particular wou'd be impertinent in *this Place*, because not necessary in *any*, the great Difficulty not being in *Understanding*, but in *Practising* the Rule.

The Purport then of it is, that in Common Life We shou'd alway be ready to doe to our Neighbour such good offices, as substituting Ourselves in his Room by a feign'd Supposition, We shou'd reasonably expect from Him consider'd in our Circumstances. Where the Expectation is Modest, and the Desire within the Bounds of Proportion, Reason and the Gospel, the Rule holds Good, the Authority is Divine, and the Direction Infallible. I shall therefore hasten,

II. To

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II. To Urge and recommend the *Practice* of this Precept from Such Arguments as arise from the Nature and Constitution of it.

First, From the *Equity* of it.

Secondly, From the *Security* We have from *its own Light* of not being Mistaken in the Meaning of it.

Thirdly, From the *Comprehensive Nature* of it.

First, From the *Equity* of it.

Human Nature however variously represented in particular Persons, as they are Individuated by distinct Existences, distinguish'd or separated by Circumstance or Character, is, like Matter in Bodies, the Common Ground-Work of the Respective Form. Hence after all the various Changes of Bulk, Figure, Station, or Employment, the distributed Essence remains unalterable, in it self *supporting*, in the Similitude *Bespeaking*, the Indefeasible Relation throughout the *whole Species*;

Acts 17. 26.

GOD *having made of one Blood all Nations of Men*. Now a Practice that is adapt'd to the Purposes of this *common Relation*, without reserve of Humour or Exception of Person, that Answers and Satisfies the Claims of Mankind upon the General Foundation must certainly be allow'd to carry an *Universal Equity*, as not subsisting upon a Precarious or Unsettled Bottom, but upon the eternal Reason of things, upon Nature, and Propriety. But the *Rule* before Us entirely comes up to this Character, because having made those Desires and those Expectations which are founded in Nature or Reason at large the Measure or Standard of Our Behaviour towards others, the Subsequent Life is Even an Impartial, dealing out, wide as 'its concerns, the offices of Humanity indifferently to all. Upon this Bottom *Pliny* hath transmitted an excellent Character of *Trajan*; the *Panegyrist* informing Us, that tho' advanced to the highest Authority over Men he lookt upon Himself as One in common amongst 'em, and that he commenc'd the more their Superior, in that he made Himself only equal to them, and that He no less consider'd that He Himself was a Man, than that He was advanced to reign over Men, *Unum Ille se ex Nobis, et hoc magis excellit atque eminent quod Unum*

*ex Nobis putat, nec Minus Hominem se, quam Homi-
bus præesse meminit.*

Here then can be no Ground for Complaint, not only because no one is excluded from such Reasonable Advantages, but because the Eye fixing upon a Point Nature within directs it to, the Aim must be good of course, and the Direction Just and Uncontroulable. The Reason we encroach upon our Neighbour, are brought to do a Rude or Unjust thing to Him is because having first lost sight of this Mark or neglecting it at least, we are under the Power of some Violent Principle, and so moved from something *Without* ourselves, we fall naturally into those irregular Courses, how injurious soever to those about Us, which through ill Nature, Design or Interest we have concluded Necessary or Expedient to the Ends Propos'd. Whereas when we keep close to our Honest Faithful Guide in whom there is no Guile, no Side-Views, no Design at Heart, but what at least may be the harmless Result of an open, Direct and Equitable Dealing, we may with Confidence appeal in what we do to the *Breasts* of Those we converse with; because following all along those Uncorrupted Suggestions *within* in our Transactions with them, we secure an Interest in their Judgement by Force of the similitude, and they can no more condemn our Practice than they can those necessary sentiments the Father of us All has equally infus'd into All at our Creation.

If then we remember we are but Men at best, maugre all the little Distinctions which rise and fall in Life, why should we decline a Practice that is suited to us as we are Men? If through Pride or Ambition we forget the Common Relation, and in that loose disregard of Equity either arrogate to ourselves what belongs not to us, or refuse to pay what of right belongs to others, the Extravagance is Criminall both ways, and by presuming to be *above* others when we ought to be but *equal* with 'em, we deserve tho' *equal* with them to be *below* them. For in some degree resembling the Fallen Angels in our Ambition, by aspiring beyond our Order, where wou'd the Injustice be, if we partook in the

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Fall too, by being driven from Men and that Dignity we were first invested with, as they were from *their first Estate, and their own Habitation*? But secondly, This *Precept* may be recommended,

Secondly, From the *security* we have from *its own Light* of not being mistaken in the meaning of It.

In most Precepts for the Regulation of Moral Life, when instead of considering them in a confus'd and general Notion we come to Apply 'em to distinct particular Cases, there's something Involved and Obscure, a *Darkness and a shadow staining them*. But here a Light within directs upon all occasions, not that disorder'd Light which *Fanaticks* or *Enthusiasts* claim, but a Light Constant, Gentle and Regular, a Light fit for a Rational Creature to have about Him at all times, and for the God of Order to bestow. Hence we need not have recourse to the *Living* or the *Dead* for Explanation; what's written upon the Table of our Hearts is our Guide and Security at once, and we can be no more a stranger to the Character or the meaning, than we can be unacquainted with ourselves in the most sensible Notices of things.

In other Cases, we must be taught the way we are to go in, but Here the way rises to us as we go, as our own Production, and we dont find it out so much by any Observation of the Footsteps of others, as make or create it by the Power of own Reflections, 'Tis indeed a

Isaiah 35.8. *High way* in the Epression of the Evangelical Prophet, and a *way faring Man tho' a fool shall not err therein*.

The Reason of our miscarriages in many Instances of our Behaviour is not any overruling Proness or Disposition in us to transgress, but the long and numerous Succession of Perplexed and Intricate particulars, that by an opposite Interest in the Argument Darken and Clog the Duty, bring an irresolution upon the mind and so check and confound us in the Application. Thus the Text is often buried under the Rubbish of Notes and Comments, and the Reader Himself distracted through too much Learning. But here we have an open and fairer View of things, without the Interposition of any Difficulty at all. We are the Text and Comment our selves,

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the Language is what Nature speaks, and we discern the Force of all, not by long Deduction but by immediate Intuition. *This Commandment is not bidden from us, neither is it far off, it is not in Heaven that thou shouldst say, who shall go up for us to Heaven and bring it unto us that we may hear and do it; Neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou shouldst say, who shall go over the Sea for us that we may hear and do it? But the word is very nigh unto Thee, in thy Mouth and in thy Heart that thou mayest do it.*

Deut. 30.
11, 12,
13, 14.

The last Argument I shall mention is taken,

Thirdly, From the Comprehensive Nature of the Precept.

Most Duties whether relating to GOD or Man are of a *limited* Nature, tyed down to *particular* matter, as only affecting the Conscience in *this*, or *that single* Instance of obligation. But here the *second table* opens at large upon the Conscience in one Comprehensive view; each Duty rises in order to the sight, and hence a compleat System of Morality, as far as our Neighbour has any right of Interest in us, either from the will of GOD, the Law of Nature or Humanity: If *all things whatsoever we wou'd that Men shou'd do to us* we are bound by the Letter and Virtue of the Precept *to do to them*, then no *exception whatsoever* is admitted, if no *Exception*, then the Claim is *unconfi'n'd*, and the Influence *universall*. That we might not either be *perplex'd in Collecting* the several Branches of Duty as they lye disunited and scatter'd in the sacred Pages, or be *confounded in distinguishing and separating* them as they lye confus'd and intermix'd with History and other incidents, the GOD of Israel, who is always ready to help our Infirmities, has by the Hand of his servant *Moses* given us a compleat Collection or Catalogue of 'em, which do not only from their own Intrinlick nature affect the whole species, but in their *Extent and Latitude* involve the *whole Duty* of Man.

Now since GOD is our Creator whom we are to Worship and Adore, and since *Man* is our Neighbour with whom we are appointed to live in a mutual interchange of offices; there are distinct Duties arising from

both these Heads. Those that relate to the *former* make up the *First*, Those to the *Latter*, the *Second Table*: but the subject I am upon only obliges me to take notice of the *Latter*, tho' with this Reserve of Reflection, that the Duties here receive Life, and Motion, and Vigour from the virtue of that obedience we owe to G O D.

Now how these under all their obligations in ordinary or more unusual Cases are Quicken'd and Animated by the *spirit* of this Injunction *moving upon 'em*, I shall more particularly make out by running through the several Branches of the Division, and withal by shewing how these through all their various Powers turn about, and take effect, by the commanding Influence of this one Comprehensive Principle; which like the First mover in Art or Nature imparts Motion, and gives Law and Order to the rest.

1 As to that Commandment which stands *first* in order in the second Table, by means of *this Precept* there is a reciprocal security, for Honour, Submission and Obedience from one side of the Relation; for good Treatment, Protection and a decent Regard from the other. Hence those who are set over us have all reasonable regard secur'd to 'em, because they whose Duty it is to be under subjection, by making this Rule the measure and standard of Their Behaviour, readily pay that Service or that Homage to their *Superiours*, which They would expect from Them under the Justice and advantage of Their Claim; *rendering to all their Dues; Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour*; and so there being no undutiful Neglect, nor any unwarrantable assuming *this way*, there is no Cause of uneasiness, nor any Room for Jealousy or Complaint *the other*. On the other Hand, the *subject Part* of Mankind are under no apprehension of Tyranny, Violence, or Oppression from their Governours: because granting there's no Power on Earth to call them to an account, in this Case the *law within* opposes the *overtact*, holds back the arm, and prevents the blow, upon the Force of this reflection, that 'tis a Treatment they woud not like themselves. Thus this Commandment is guarded

Rom. 13.7.

guarded in all the avenues to it, whatever part we are call'd upon to sustain in the Great Theatre of Life, whether That of *Governing* or *Obeying*.

2 Then *That* against *Murther* is supported hence from the Nature and Grounds of the Prohibition; because as there is a fix'd abhorrence, strong and active, against any attempt or insult whatsoever upon our own Persons, so we are instructed by *this Principle* not to draw the Bloody sword against any Man's Life; not to engage in any Designs to Disable or Maim Him in any Part, to destroy Him upon any Temptation, either by fraud, or Violence. But stronger still does the maxim hold against our going about when not rous'd by Hunger, or Injury, *like roaring Lions seeking whom they may devour*; against any Industrious Pursuit to shed innocent Blood, or to deface our *makers Image* in Man, the Creatures Glory, and his last great Regard. *O my soul come not Thou into their secret, unto their assembly mine Honour be not thou united.* Gen. 49. 6.

3 If the invading our Neighbour's tenderest Right by *defiling his Bed* or any Article of this Nature be the Subject in Question, the *copiousness of this Rule*, furnishes out Provision against any Injury of this kind, tho' *Sarai Abraham's* wife attracts the Eye, and a captivated *Abimelech* beholds Her in the Insolence of all Her Charms, and in the height of Passion in his own Breast. For when we turn the Tables and bring the Case home to ourselves, there's such a forbidding Cloud and Blackness upon the Representation, that the shock of the Reflection unravells and confounds the Impure scheme, turns even the *simple one* from the Purposes of his *Lust*, tho' in haste before to Ascend that *Bed the Adulterers had deck'd with Coverings of Tapestry, with Carv'd works, and fine Linnen of Egypt, had Perfum'd with Myrrh, Aloes and Cinamon.* Prov. 7. 16. 17.

4 Are we prohibited to Injure or Abuse our Neighbour in any Branch of his Property by *Theft*, by stealing his Goods, or robbing him of any thing Providence, his own Industry, or the Laws have made his own? Will not a Compliance herein fix a seal of security upon what he has, which no Opportunity, no tempta-

tion of advantage can induce us to break into ; tho' the spoils are ample, and only Heaven and ourselves conscious of what is done.

5 Again, A small acquaintance with our own Inclinations will Inform us that to suffer in our Persons, our Fortune or Reputation by *Perjury or false witness* is what nature recoils at in her most resigning moments, and what we cannot think upon in a neat view, but with the severest Resentments: for tho' perhaps in such a Case the Innocent may be prepar'd thro' an inward firmness of mind to suffer the Evil with Constancy and Resolution, yet the Imputation of Guilt lies heavy upon him, and if he must sink down, its not the *Punishment*, but the *manner and Circumstance*, that oppresses him, the weight of *this* thought that *False witnesses have risen up against him, and laid to his charge things that he knew not*. With what Propriety then or with what Peace of mind can the *false witness* rise up to smite or wound his Brother in any Capacity?

Psalm 35. 11.

If thro' an unavoidable deficiency in humane Laws the Calumniating or the Perjur'd escape the Punishment provided by the Legislature for such Villanous attempts, his own thoughts however are let loose upon him, and if the dread of himself in the most remote and retir'd Corner, be not more Insupportable than the Execution of a Law too mild in such a Case, 'tis because the *Father of Lies* has harden'd and fear'd him against the Impressions of Conscience ; the obdurate feels not, because he is past feeling.

Exod. 20.
17.

Mark 10.
19.

6 The last Commandment, if we except that peculiarity of the Prohibition of all irregular Desires, is to be lookt upon rather as a Supplement than an addition to the foregoing. And we may observe that tho' the *Septuagint* expresses the Commandment by *οὐ ἐπιθυμῆς, thou shalt not Covet* ; *St Mark* when he comes to mention it amongst the rest in the second Table, makes use of another Term *μὴ δυνῆσθαι, Defraud not*.

From which, as well as from the Nature and Reason of the Thing, (our neighbour as he is not to be injur'd in any Branch of his Property, being the object of our Duty here) we may conclude that the coveting chiefly for-

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forbidden in this Place is not That which is consider'd as barely confin'd to the Breast, without any Consequencies but what affect only the subject it resides in, but such as either breakes out upon our Neighbour in an Injurious overt-act, or at least has a tendency to deprive him of some Part or other of his Possessions.

Now as this Rule guards and protects him wherever he goes from insult and injustice in those particulars already mention'd, so it is his security throughout his whole concerns, whether it respects his *House, his Wife, his Servant or his Maid, his Ox, his Ass, or any thing that is His*; the same Reason why nature arms its self against some particular acts of Injustice giving us Indiscriminately an averſion to all without distinction.

Thus *this Principle* runs through our *whole relative Behaviour*, maintains and preserves order without deserting any Branch of it; and that we may give it the distinguishing and the finish'd Character, and a greater it cannot have, and a less wou'd come short of it, *'Tis the Law and the Prophets.*

If in the close the Enquiry shou'd be, how it comes to pass that notwithstanding the Provision of this Rule, which we have laid down as a support and security of Innocence, under the various obligations, there's such a General Transgression of Duty as in Disobedience and Rebellion, in Murder, in Uncleanneſs and Adultery, in Theft, Bearing false witness and other Instances of Violation, The Reply is, that the Enormity of our actions does not arise from any *Defect in the Rule*, but from our *not applying it*, and tho' the Error be the same whether we deviate having no Compass to go by, or because we use it not, yet the Guilt lies only in the latter Circumstance; in that having the means of going right in our own Hands, we voluntarily take a wrong Course, when it is our Duty to follow the unerring Direction.

But Now, as in the old world, *the wickedness of man is great in the Earth, and every Imagination of the* Gen. 6. 5. *Thoughts of his Heart is Evil continually. That Body of Death* the Apostle complains of is a dead Weight or Clogg

Rom. 7.
24.

Ver. 23.

Clogg upon the soul, which, when That would rise to the Purposes of its Creation, depresses and keeps it down in an unnatural subserviency. *The Law in our members warring against the Law of our mind brings us into Captivity to the Law of sin.* Thus the strength of Temptation without, meeting with a Party within from our own Lust, carries us at first where we would not; and then being reconcil'd to our ways by the Prevalency of Custom, we at last come to take pleasure in the Rebellion, and Man transgresses because he Will transgress. And this Directs me

III. To point out some of those more remarkable *obstructions* to the practice of the Precept, which at this time seem most likely to corrupt us, with some Curfory Remarks upon them in order to prevent their Influence over us.

Those I shall mention are

First, An Immoderate Love of Gain,

Secondly, An Habit of ill Nature

Thirdly, Revenge.

First An Immoderate Love of Gain.

When we once make our own *Interest*, that Point or Center to which all our Actions tend, the world cannot expect even an equitable Treatment from us: because under such a mercenary Subserviency, we are neither at leisure to consider, nor inclin'd to regard, the Claim of others; the Consideration of Reason and Justice on the opposite side, being either laid aside in the Question, or overrul'd at least by the Importunity of that Unconscionable Regard to our selves. Here the Distinction of Behaviour turns not upon *Justice* but upon *Interest*, and hence the true tho' seldom the avow'd Rule of Practice is not what *Conscience* but what *Mammon* suggests, and This often interfering with the Law and the Prophets we violate Both *for Handfulls of Barley and Pieces of Bread*; we break in upon Common Equity and as little concern our selves about the just expectations of others, as we do with the suggestions of our own Consciences.

But why shou'd we suffer any meaness in us to Divert or Control the Innate Propensities to Justice, any

little

Ezek. 13.
19.

little consideration to overballance that Love we ought to have for Him for whom Christ dyed? when Fortune has courted us to lay hold of an advantage coming upon us, and we have seiz'd the opportunity, the Gain at best is what the wise in all ages have despised, and none but fools in any have ador'd; but when by Violence or any fraudulent Dealing, we Rise at the Expence of Justice and Honour, there's such a Tainting Quality in the Guilt, that we corrupt our honest Birth, and suffer in the Exaltation.

However it must be allow'd we act upon view here, and tho' the Judgement be wrong, the mistake has shew and Colour for the Temptation; But some offend against the Precept without proposing any thing at all, are carry'd off sowly from the Rule by *Constitution*, and transgress purely thro' an habit.

Secondly, Of ill Nature.

Tho' this Principle where it has got footing seldom fails to harraiss those about it in unreasonable Disputes; yet upon more publick occasions it rises to vexatious, if not unjust Demands; teazes and abuses openly, as tho' it took delight in shewing it self in an ostentation of Malevolence. The Gall and Wormwood in This is the very reverse of the Balm and Sweetness of the other Principle, and if One under the Infection does in the common offices of Life as he wou'd be done by, 'tis rather a work not regularly to be accounted for, than That of Inclination; the effect being the offspring of Chance; as *wit* from an *Idiot*, or *Conduct* from a *Madman*. It wou'd be a weak thought to expect a peaceable Behaviour from him, because the uneasiness within naturally works outward, and we cant suppose that an ill-natur'd Enemy to himself will be Friendly, Gentle, or Benevolent to others. What makes the Juncture more improbable, is, that the unsociable Disposition in him, seems peculiarly averse to good advice, to the succours of his own and another's Reason; Doctrine to Him (to apply the words of the Son of Sirach) is as Eccl. 21. 19. *Fetters on the Feet, and like Manacles on the Right Hand.*

An Affize Sermon, Preach'd

How then shou'd a Man guard against such a Temper in himself, when he has any Reason to apprehend it is coming upon Him! How shou'd he endeavour even by Prayer and Fasting to Dispossess the Evil Spirit when it has once enter'd into him, least by Incouragement it shou'd not only shake and tear the Possess'd himself, but threaten likewise and endanger the Peace and welfare of a whole Neighbourhood! If a man thinks himself under no restraint of Conscience as to what others may expect from him, and what upon the Reflexion Reason tells him is their Due, yet upon a Civil account, for his own Ease and Credit, he shou'd not suffer this Precept to be obstructed by ill Nature; but strait suppress what is found Malevolent in him, that it may do no Harm, either by bringing down *Vexation* or *Contempt* upon Him. For tho' at first one under the Power of such a Temper may not possibly be sensible of the sting of *either*, yet at last *Both* will overtake Him, and then when most he wants a support from *himself*, and withall the Countenance of *others*, he *torments himself* and is *unregarded* at the same time.

The Last obstruction is

Thirdly, Revenge.

Revenge in the very Notion involves a Violation of this Precept, as letting loose our Power upon an Adversary, in an ill Natur'd, or injurious instance of Resentment. The business of it is to Gall him, not out of any respect to self preservation, the Good of others, or his Reformation; but for that inhuman satisfaction of seeing Him Toiling and Struggling in Distress; a satisfaction as inconsistent with the Duty in the Text, as the Parts of a Contradiction are with each other. Here's a *Complex* Transgression, the Man under the sway of this Passion not only abusing his Neighbour, but boasting that he has done mischief, doubling transgressing by *injuring* and by *insulting*.

When Practice is thus corrupted, *Equity* is swallow'd up in *Revenge*, and then That having no Room in our thoughts

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thoughts, the insatiable Thirst admits of nothing, but what some way or other Ministers to the barbarous gratifications. Hence what moves us at such a juncture is not the consideration of what others may in modesty expect from us, but what the sullen lust Demands at our Hands; and this we know is only satisfied, by being Instrumental to the Fall or Misfortunes of others. But such a fight can only be the entertainment of an involv'd spirit, and when the wretch in resenting something that has displeas'd him, is under no bounds of temper in the Prosecution, Meanness or Cowardice is his name; and tho' by a Vexatious insisting upon every Point of advantage, *Revenge* may at last be satisfied; the consequent Triumph is like the mirth of Fools, a Glorifying in their own shame.

But who are we that we shou'd indulge a Passion so prejudicial to others and so inconsistent with the Circumstances of our own Being. We are Beings in our Frame not design'd to be boisterous; Corruptible and unsettled, *a wind that passeth away and cometh not again.* In the Impotence of the Passion what peevish silly animal in the scale of being must we be compar'd to? a Foolish Contemptible wasp is the fittest Emblem: but with this Disadvantage to the Man, that *That* by nature's Laws shoots out and spends unregarded its little Hates, *This* unnaturally stings himself and others in the guilty struggle, impiously usurping the Perogative of that God, of whom it is written, *that Vengeance is His and that He will repay.* Rom. 12.
19.

IV. I shall only add a *Reflection* or two and Conclude.

First, If the doing to others as we wou'd be done by, be an establish'd Rule in Equity, founded upon the Highest Reason and of Eternal Obligation, what must we say to those whose general run of Behaviour towards others, is a Contradiction to what they desire of Them, as tho' the Rule was inverted and the obligation directly on the other Side? such men seem to act

act in Defiance to their own Judgements upon things, to the Natural Rights of mankind, and the Positive Injunctions of our Saviour. They fall in with that *wild Philosophy* that represents a Man in Arms and Hostility from his Cradle, under no Natural restraints of Justice or Compassion, by nature's Birth-right a *Lion*, or a *Fox*, as *Violence* or *Fraud* shall best promote and serve the *brutish Interest*.

But how will they stand the Stock of their own Conscience, when they come to reflect upon what Unbounded Liberties they have taken in opposition to their better Thoughts? *Wickedness condemn'd by her own witness is very timorous, and being press'd with Conscience always forecasteth grievous things.* How will they answer the Charge of the Community against them? The submitting to no Law but what is the mere positive result of an Arbitrary and uncontrol'd will, carries in it such insolence, and Presumption that they shou'd be lookt upon as so many Savages in Hobbs's State of Nature; and since they have no natural Principle to restrain them from doing harm, we shou'd never be unprepar'd in any suspicious place to defend our selves against them. But where is their Gratitude? Others harm not them, not only because they wou'd not willingly suffer any Injury themselves, but because they love Mankind; These tho' as unwilling as They to receive harm, Injure without Remorse, not where any offence has been given, but where a good Disposition to oblige might have Disarm'd them of any Cruelty. But to what Purpose shou'd we expostulate in a Rational way with those, who owning no obligation to any Laws, Humane or Divine, openly declare to the World, they *neither fear God nor Regard Man*. If any thing but the Grace of God working in 'em after an extraordinary manner, can reduce them to Reflection and Duty, it must be the Terror of the Law; which set in Array, may perhaps open a Passage in their Heart, for that word which is *Quick and Powerful and sharper than a two edged Sword*.

Heb. 4. 12.

Secondly,

Secondly, If we are to be govern'd in our Conduct by this *Rule*, what Judgment must we pass upon those who in a different Class from the other sort, as being *over righteous* pursue a suppos'd Offender, through all the rigorous methods of a vexatious suit; strain upon all Occasions, and even torture the Law to speak a sense it cannot mean. However such Legal Disturbers of mankind may shelter themselves under the umbrage of going no further than the Letter, the extream Resentment in many Cases is Injurious in the Highest Degree, the more dangerous and inexcusable, because what others under Heat and Passion offer at in profess'd violence, These often effect in Form of Justice, sedately, and in Cool Blood. Interpretations on the Favourable side, where ambiguity or uncertainty gives Room for 'em, are what *our Law* allows in the *heaviest Charges*; but These more severe than That, willingly admit of none in the most *Trifling*; redress of wrongs being not so much the Mark they aim at, as the tormenting those they contend with.

But is not This throwing up the Precept we are upon? wou'd not they condemn the Practice when turn'd upon themselves? wou'd they come under the Hardships of it where they might be heard in a milder way? wou'd they not lay hold of an Interest in Equity, which as a Relief from the Letter, softens the Rigour of a Prosecution? Have they not heard that it hath Matt. 5. 39. 40. been said, *An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth*? But These require *more*: Has not our Saviour said, *resist not Evil*? But These *delight in it*. *Whosoever shall smite us upon one Cheek* are we not to turn to Him *the other also*? But These *smite again*; If any man will *sue us at the Law, and take away our Coat*, are we not to let him have the *Cloak also*? But These wou'd sooner reach his *Life* if *Law* wou'd do it, than Part with *either*, if all they have can Preserve *Both*.

But what can such expect hereafter, but to have their own Example of Demanding Justice when scarcely

ly injur'd come home upon 'em in their last Distress; when Justice will condemn them; when, because they have shew'd no mercy, they shall have judgement without mercy?

Thirdly, and Lastly, From this Rule we may be allow'd to expostulate with Those who brought up and educated in the Purest and Best constituted Church in the world, and withal professing, as they ought to do, the profoundest veneration for Divine Institutions, nevertheless attack Her with Insult and Contempt; expressly averring that "We can perform no valid Acts of Priesthood, that our very Prayers are Sins, our Sacraments no Sacraments; bur Absolutions null and of no Force, that God ratifies nothing in Heaven that we do in his Name upon Earth, that our Bishops, Priests, and all that adhere to 'em are out of the Church, that we can claim no Benefits of God's Promises, no not of his Assisting Grace, nor of Remission of sins through the merits of Christs Blood.

Is this a fit Language for Those who use it? must we, once their Brethren and Companions, from whom they have unwarrantably separated, lye under the Sentence of Excommunication from Them? Is this the Return for that Compassion their unhappy Prejudices have met with? *Had it been an open Enemy that done us this Dishonour we could have born it*, but to be thus reproach'd by those who once walk'd with us in the House of God as Friends, is a Circumstance we have Reason to Resent after a peculiar manner. Well may our Holy Mother complain in the words of the Prophets *Hear O heavens, and give Ear O Earth, I have nourish'd and brought up Children and they have Rebell'd against me, my Friends have dealt treacherously with me, they are become mine Enemies.* But may the Devices of as many as *Have evil will at Sion be even as the Grass growing upon the House-Tops, which withereth afore it be pluck'd up, whereof the mower filletb not his Hand, neither He that bindeth up the sheaves his Bosom.* May our Jerusalem be built as a City that is at unity in it self whither the Tribes may

Psal. 55.

Psal. 41.

Isai. 1. 2.

Lam. 12.

Psal. 129.

5.

Ver. 6, 7.

Psal. 122.

3. 4.

may go up, even the Tribes of the Lord, to testifie unto Israel, to give thanks unto the Name of the Lord. May They Prosper that Love Her, may Peace be with-^{Ver. 6, 7.} in Her walls, and Plenteousness within her Palaces.

Now to God the Father, to God the Son, and to God the Holy Ghost be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Honour, Might, Majesty and Dominion, Now and for evermore. Amen.

Page 1. For Comfortable read Conformable.

F I N I S.